

Weekly Column for October 20, 2005

This week there is some more good news, this time on the legal front. Earlier this month a decision came down in the case against former Police Commissioner Mark Whitman, who was suing the City of Troy for more than \$180,000 and lifetime health benefits.

Clearly the lifetime health benefits for him and his family would be a large burden for the residents of Troy, and we did not believe it was something the City should have to take on.

The Honorable Judge George Ceresia agreed with us. In addition to denying the health benefits, the City also successfully argued that Whitman should not be eligible for any benefits from the years 1996 through September of 2000 as the statute of limitations had expired. All told, our Corporation Counsel's office saved the City more than \$145,000 and the benefits.

The reason I am explaining this to you is that there was an article in the paper this week that several candidates running for office suggested that the City cut the consulting services line in the Corporation Counsel office.

What a huge mistake that would be. Essentially, for around \$8 per average household, this fund is responsible for the City's defense against lawsuits. Without it, we would not have had the expert legal help of attorney Bryan Goldberger for this case. Earlier this year, we were successful in a police brutality case where we hired outside counsel that was an expert in the field. I like results, and we have been getting the results.

In the past, under a previous administration, there were up to 10 lawyers on staff for the City. This year, we have 5. If we need more help, particularly in defense of a lawsuit, we have the funds to do that, and at less of cost than was done in the past. And we have been successful.

It's one thing for people to come out and say they want to cut government, it's another to do it without destroying the day-to-day job requirements we have. In the past two years we have cut more than a dozen jobs that has resulted in more than \$500,000 being saved each year. We are willing to cut the size of government, it is what we believe in. But not when it will hurt the residents of Troy.

Have a great weekend. Don't forget the benefit concert for the hurricane victims is this Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the corner of River Street and State Street, as well as Riverfront Park.